

# **Biography of G. N. Baur**

## ***From the Citation for the 1984 N.W. Jolly Medal***

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The Institute of Foresters of Australia has awarded the N. W. Jolly Medal, its highest award for merit in forestry, to George Norton Baur. The citation leading to this award is as follows:

“George Norton Baur was born on 21 May 1930. He was appointed as a forestry trainee by the Forestry Commission of N.S.W. and undertook his initial training from 1947 to 1951. The first two years were spent at Sydney University, followed by a year in the field. The final two years of his course were spent at the Australian Forestry School in Canberra where he was awarded the Diploma of Forestry with distinction and won the Schlich Memorial Medal.

In 1952 George was appointed to Coffs Harbour where he undertook silvicultural research under the leadership of David Dun. George was appreciative of the limited training he had received for a career in scientific research and obtained the Forestry Commission's approval to return to Sydney University as a trainee in order to complete his science degree during 1953 and 1954. He was awarded a first class honours degree in Botany in 1955 and returned to Coffs Harbour to take up the position of O.I.C. of the North Coast Silvicultural Research Organisation. During his stay at Coffs Harbour, George made significant contributions in a variety of silvicultural fields, including rainforest silviculture, stand dynamics, eucalypt plantation establishment and the nutrition of southern pines.

In 1961 he was awarded the Andre Mayer FAO Fellowship, which allowed him to study the ecological basis of rainforest silviculture and management in South America, Africa and South East Asia. On his return in 1962 George was transferred to Head Office in Sydney and undertook the supervision of regional research centres then located in Taree, Baradine, Coffs Harbour, Bathurst, Tumut and later Batemans Bay/Eden.

As Senior Silvicultural Research Officer (an appointment made in 1964) George made major contributions to the administration of research in N.S.W. and the research centres flourished. He was responsible for comprehensive guidelines on the administration of research and the recording and reporting of research data. George attended the Forestry Research Conference in Canberra in 1965, which was instrumental (after some controversy) in the formation of the Research Working Groups under the auspices of the Australian Forestry Council. He was directly involved in translating the Research Working Group concept into the very effective organisation which exists today.

It was during this period that environmental issues commenced to dominate the Australian forestry scene, and George was deeply involved in formulating and implementing the Forestry Commission's environmental policies. His renowned ability with the written word was to stand him in good stead at this time, as he virtually became one of forestry's key spokesmen.

Early in 1973 George was placed in charge of the new Public Relations and Extension Services Branch of the Commission (which became the Public Relations and Environment Branch in 1975). This Branch was active in many fields including public relations, education, extension and landscape planning as well as dealing with the great pressure being applied by the environmental movement. George was directly involved in the preparation of a large number of important submissions to various parliamentary committees, environmental impact statements and background papers. These documents, many of which George was the anonymous author, will stand as reasoned, objective statements of forestry's positions and policies for the forest historians of the future.

In 1978, George spent six months at the School of Forestry, University of Christchurch, New Zealand as Visiting Fellow so that he could pass on his wealth of experience to the students and staff of that School.

In 1981, the Standing Committee of the Australian Forestry Council invited George to prepare the forestry statement dealing with the National Conservation Strategy, and George continued to play an active role in the development of that strategy. Also in 1981, the Forestry Commission decided to reintroduce the position of Silviculturist and appropriately George was appointed to this new position.

Even a cursory examination of George Baur's contribution to forestry in Australia leads to the recognition that he has been, and still is, an innovator of considerable creativity. George was the driving force behind the establishment of the first local branch of the Institute of Foresters of Australia at Coffs Harbour in 1955. He was the Honorary Secretary of the North Coast Branch (now Northern Branch) until 1959 when he departed overseas on the Andre Mayer Fellowship. The Northern NSW Branch of the Institute of Foresters still plays an active role in Institute affairs and it was the prototype of the many branches now active throughout Australia.

As a research administrator George was aware of the reluctance of foresters to report research results, and he was largely responsible for the introduction of the formal series of publications such as Research Notes, Technical Papers and Research Reports, which are published by the Forestry Commission. Unlike many of his peers, George had a flair for documenting ideas, events and meetings. He is a great communicator both orally and with the written word. He has contributed many scientific papers to the forestry literature, but he was possibly the first Australian forester to write a book on forestry for the layman. This book, with the whimsical title of "A bit about bush", was published by the Forestry Commission in 1972.

George recognised the need for a uniform approach to the classification of vegetation types in N.S.W. and was instrumental in the publication of "Forest Types of N.S.W." as Research Note 17. This publication reflects his great knowledge of forest botany and ecology and has been in continued use since it was first published in 1965. George also saw the necessity to conserve representative examples and unusual forest communities long before the environmental movement clamoured for this on a massive scale. In 1965 he was responsible for the introduction of the Native Forest Preservation Programme in N.S.W. which now amounts to 157 reserves totaling some 32 000 ha. The notable feature of these reserves is that they have been chosen on genuine scientific and conservational criteria.

During his period with the Public Relations and Extension Services Branch, George continued to look for new ideas. The Branch introduced a wealth of clearly written extension information, extended the scope and content of the Forestry Commission's Bulletin "Forest and Timber", saw the appointment of a qualified teacher as Education Officer, and greatly expanded the Commission's involvement in forest recreation. Landscape planning became a consideration not only in picnic areas but aesthetics of forestry operations in general became a feature of forest management. George was also instrumental in the Commission's initial approaches to public participation in the management of flora reserves and a small but important urban forest in the Sydney region.

Since his appointment in 1981 as the Commission's Silviculturist, George has been able to return to his earlier speciality. As might be expected, he has again introduced a highly innovative and useful series of "silvicultural notes" and "silvicultural jottings" which have already seen a most welcome resurgence of professional interest and debate in this field.

It is no coincidence that a forester as innovative as George had developed very sound attitudes towards conservation and the environment well ahead of the popular movement. His early interest in the ecology of rainforest was further developed during his Honours course at Sydney University and his field studies on the North Coast of N.S.W. His 1957 paper on the distribution and abundance of rainforest in N.S.W. is still a most important statement. In 1968, following his FAO Fellowship, the Government Printer published his well known and authoritative book on the "Ecological Basis of Rainforest Management". His knowledge of the rainforest has been used to advantage by many institutions and individuals, including the Institute of Foresters, the forest services and, paradoxically, George has always been acknowledged as an expert by the environmental movement, despite his early and active opposition to the more militant and radical elements of that movement.

The results of George Baur's experiments on the silviculture of the sub-tropical rainforest were a major stimulus in developing the "50% Canopy Retention" system of selective logging which was implemented successfully in the rainforests of the Casino Region for many years prior to their dedication as National Park.

It was due to George's foresight that the Forestry Commission established a research scholarship at the University of New England in 1965 for a study on the ecology and management of two possums. He strongly advocated the appointment of wildlife ecologists to forest services and gave detailed evidence to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Wildlife Conservation in 1972. This was the only submission from a forest service at that time. George was chairman of Panel 3 of the FORWOOD Conference held in Canberra in 1974. The Panel's report on "Multiple Use of Forest Resources" was acclaimed by Mr. J. C. Westoby (FAO) as "the most sensible, sober and reasoned approach to the very complex problem of multiple use of the forest resource that it has been my privilege to read".

George Baur, already a Fellow of the Institute, will continue to make a contribution to Australian forestry."